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ABSTRACT

Designed to assess immediate and delayed comprehension of expository prose, this instrument is a 40-item multiple-choice test composed of open-ended stems, each followed by four nonoverlapping choices. Control of content of the items was based upon an analysis of the accompanying 1,300-word passage on the Kalahari Desert. Validity, reliability, and normative data are included. (This document is one of those reviewed in The Research Instruments Project (TRIP) monograph "Measures for Research and Evaluation in the English Language Arts, Volume 2," published by the Committee on Research of the National Council of Teachers of English in cooperation with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills. The TRIP review, included here as an introduction to the instrument, describes the instrument's category (reading comprehension), title, author, date, age range (middle school/junior high school), purpose, and physical characteristics.) (JL)

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ED236656

Discourse-Analysis Based, Written, Multiple-Choice Post-Test for Comprehension Assessment of Expository Prose.

The measurement instruments contained in this document have been reviewed in a monograph (cited below) edited by William T. Fagan, Charles Cooper, and Julie Jensen, for The Research Instruments Project (TRIP), and funded by a grant from the Trustees of the NCTE Research Foundation:

Measures for Research and Evaluation
in the
English Language Arts
Volume II

The purpose of the editors has been to select and review measurement instruments pertaining to all aspects of research and evaluation in the English language arts, e.g. language and language development, literacy, literature, reading (including comprehension, teacher-pupil interaction, etc.), writing, and teacher knowledge and attitudes. In order to make some of the actual instruments reviewed more readily available, the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (ERIC/RCS) has cooperated with the editors by processing selected instruments into the ERIC system (see the 42 documents assigned Clearinghouse accession numbers CS 207 904-945).

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CS207731

Category: Reading Comprehension

Title: Discourse-analysis Based, Written, Multiple-choice Post-test for Comprehension Assessment of Expository Prose

Author: Petey Young

Age Range: Middle school/Junior high

Description of Instrument:

Purpose: To assess immediate and delayed comprehension of expository prose.

Date of Construction: 1980.

Physical Description: A forty-item multiple-choice test composed of open-ended stems, each followed by four non-overlapping choices. Stems and choices are as short as possible. Control of the content of the items was based upon an analysis of the accompanying 1300-word passage on the Kalahari Desert using Turner and Greene's (1977) directions for following Kintsch's (1974) system of discourse analysis. The analysis established whether bits of information were comparatively general and interrelated or detailed and isolated. After the analysis had been collapsed to three levels of generality by including the more detailed levels in the third level, equal numbers of items were directed at each of the three levels. The validity of the semantic match between test item and mother passage was established by comparing an analysis of the items with that of the passage.

Validity, Reliability, Normative data and Key Findings:

The instrument was revised and validated by comparisons between the performances of two groups of students: One group took the test without reading the passage upon which the test was based; the other read the passage and had it available while taking the test. Revision consisted of deleting items answered correctly by a significant number of the first group and

incorrectly by a significant number of the second group. After revision, one-way analyses of variance showed the differences between performances of the groups to be significant at a $p < .001$ level. The Hoyt reliability value for the group which read the passage was high, 0.89. When the instrument was used to gather data, treatment groups outperformed control groups at a $p < .001$ level of significance on both the immediate and delayed administration in two studies involving a total of 240 seventh graders.

Related References

Kintsch, W. The representation of meaning in memory. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1974.

Turner, A. & Greene, E. The construction and use of a propositional text base (Technical Report No. 63). Boulder, Colorado: Institute for the Study of Intellectual Behavior, University of Colorado, 1977.

Young, P. Effect of inference-making aids on poor readers' comprehension (Technical Report No. 555). Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Individualized Schooling, 1980. (ED 193 607)

"Discourse-Analysis Based, Written,
Multiple-Choice Post-Test for Comprehension
Assessment of Expository Prose"

DATA-GATHERING INSTRUMENT

Multiple-Choice

Comprehension Test

-Correct answers are circled.

-Data from items marked D were deleted in the revised version.

Multiple-choice Test (Mark your answers on the Answer Sheet)

1. In dry times, Bushmen

   A. know where to look for water
   B. get along without water
   C. eat dried-up leaves of plants
   D. use only water they have stored

2. In the coolest months, June and July,

   A. the rains begin
   B. the water holes dry up
   C. plants bud and blossom
   D. water holes are full

3. Bushmen get most of their food from

D

   A. hunting animals
   B. growing crops
   C. water holes
   D. gathering plants

4. The Kalahari is

   A. part of the Sahara
   B. mountainous and dry
   C. in southern Africa
   D. the largest desert in the world

5. Water in the Kalahari Desert

   A. cannot be found
   B. sometimes freezes
   C. is always warm
   D. is found only in sip wells

6. The plants of the Kalahari all grow only

   A. where there is some shade
   B. near the werfs of the Bushmen
   C. if they have deep roots
   D. during one time of the year

7. Water holes in the Kalahari

(A) are several miles apart
B. have palm trees around them
C. are found only outside the desert
D. disappear in January and February

8. Poison for arrows is

A. made from tortoises
B. filed into points
C. made by women
(D) dried on the arrows

9. Dried-up leaves of a plant

A. are eaten by Bushmen
B. make poison for arrows
(C) may indicate roots to eat
D. are used for medicine

10. An animal that sometimes goes outside the desert for water is the

A. lizard
B. springhare
(C) ostrich
D. tortoise

11. Seeds sprout when the desert is

D

A. cool and dry
B. cool and rainy
C. hot and dry
(D) hot and rainy

12. Bushmen

A. have always lived in the desert
B. once were cattle-raising people
C. leave the desert in dry times
(D) once lived on rich grasslands

13. Bi and ga roots, tsama melons, and wild cucumbers are used as a source of

(A) water
B. food
C. poison
D. seeds

14. Bushmen eat mostly

D

A. antelope meat
B. leopard tortoises
(C) roots, fruits, and nuts
D. ostrich eggs

15. When dry times come, many animals

D

A. hibernate in underground skerms
(B) travel across the desert for water
C. locate lake beds and find water
D. move closer to the Bushmen camps

16. Rains come to the Kalahari during

(A) December, January, and February
B. September, October, and November
C. March, April, and May
D. June, July, and August

17. Extra body water is carried in two body sacs by the

A. antelope
B. lion
C. ostrich
(D) tortoise

18. Sip wells are

A. a few inches from the surface of the land
B. dug so that rainwater can collect
(C) sucked from with a straw in dry times
D. found in the center of a Bushman camp

19. Arrows are prepared

A. before a feast
B. in the evening
(C) early in the morning
D. by the women

20. A Bushman camp has

D

A. many animals inside it
B. a thorn fence around it
(C) a number of small houses
D. one large sleeping shelter

21. Ostrich eggs are used for

(A) storing water
B. baiting traps
C. making arrowheads
D. feeding families

22. Bushmen hunt with

A. shallow, wooden stamping blocks
(B) arrows, spears, hooks, and poles
C. only poisoned spears and arrows
D. ropes, spears, and leather nets

23. The women and children

A. work in the camp all day
(B) gather plants and catch tortoises
C. do not catch animals or hunt
D. only cook and fix the food

24. Bushmen move most often

A. in the hottest season of the year
B. when their band becomes very small
C. in the rainy season of the year
(D) in the cool season when no rain falls

25. Bushmen live in bands that

A. wander anywhere in the Kalahari Desert
(B) wander only within a certain territory
C. move outside the desert in dry times
D. fight with each other over territory

26. Bushmen are

A. tall, thin nomads
B. brave lion hunters
C. people who worship the sun
(D) rather small people

27. A Bushman builds a house to live in

A. for his entire life
B. during the rainy season
(C) until he moves to a new place
D. during sandstorms

28. The territory of every Bushman band

A. is very small
B. changes from year to year
(C) is a vast stretch of land
D. seldom has a water hole

29. A skerm is a

(A) Bushman house
B. type of animal
C. hot, dry wind
D. stamping block for food

30. Bushmen

A. never see flowering plants
B. hide from the sun at noon
(C) struggle to find food and water
D. cannot find water during the dry season

31. All the desert animals

A. hide during the heat of the day
B. lap dew in the morning
C. store water in body sacs
(D.) have ways of finding or storing water

32. Bushmen live in

A. very large bands of people
(B.) bands of about twenty people
C. different bands at different times
D. bands only during the dry season

33. Werf is the Bushman name for

A. animal
B. tree
C. food
(D.) camp

34. Baobab trees have

(A.) great, thick trunks
B. large, underground roots
C. thin, short branches
D. shiny, hard bark

35. A large part of the Bushman diet is made up of

A. antelope meat
B. leopard tortoises
C. ngoa moths
(D.) mongongo nuts

36. When Bushmen hunt large animals such as antelope, they

A. kill them with sharp spears
(B.) shoot them with poisoned arrows
C. catch them with hooks
D. dig pits to catch them in

37. Bushmen use grasses for

D

A. feeding animals
B. covering sip wells
C. making animal traps
(D) building houses

38. The Kalahari Desert does NOT have

(A) pine trees
B. grasses and bushes
C. nuts and fruits
D. flowering plants

39. The Kalahari Desert

(A) covers more than one nation
B. is in northern Africa
C. has no people in it
D. has one large river

40. The land of the Kalahari

A. has dry, sloping hills
(B) is flat
C. is mountainous
D. has moving sand dunes

41. Material from the ngoa moth and the mamba is used for

A. food
(B) making poison
C. decorating eggshells
D. medicine

42. Smaller animals are hunted with

A. poisoned arrows
(B) poles and metal hooks
C. spears
D. ropes and nets

43. Hollow reeds 3-feet to 4-feet long are used

A. to dig plants
B. for spear handles
(C) in sip wells
D. to hook small animals

44. Leopard tortoises are

(A) easily caught
B. killed with clubs
C. shot with arrows
D. valued for the shell

45. A stamping block is used to

A. make arrows
(B) mash seeds and nuts
C. make designs for eggshells
D. pound the earth smooth

46. Women and children gather most of their plants

(A) miles away from the camp
B. at night when it is cool
C. inside the Bushman camp
D. wherever the hunters hunt

Name _____

(Answer sheet for the multiple-choice test)

Circle the BEST answer.

1. A B C D
2. A B C D
3. A B C D
4. A B C D
5. A B C D
6. A B C D
7. A B C D
8. A B C D
9. A B C D
10. A B C D
11. A B C D
12. A B C D
13. A B C D
14. A B C D
15. A B C D
16. A B C D
17. A B C D
18. A B C D
19. A B C D
20. A B C D
21. A B C D
22. A B C D
23. A B C D
24. A B C D
25. A B C D
26. A B C D
27. A B C D
28. A B C D
29. A B C D
30. A B C D
31. A B C D
32. A B C D
33. A B C D
34. A B C D
35. A B C D
36. A B C D
37. A B C D
38. A B C D
39. A B C D
40. A B C D
41. A B C D
42. A B C D
43. A B C D
44. A B C D
45. A B C D
46. A B C D

(Passage for control groups C1 and C2)

THE KALAHARI DESERT

In southwestern Africa there is a great stretch of dry land. The land is flat with no lakes or rivers. Vegetation is scarce. The plants and animals that live here have adapted to an environment with little water and high temperatures. This land is the Kalahari Desert. The Kalahari Desert covers part of three nations of southern Africa.

The plants of the Kalahari have adapted to the desert environment. Most of these plants are grasses and bushes. However, every now and then across the barren desert a huge, 200-foot baobab tree is seen. Its great, thick branches reach like stretching arms into the sky. The bark is thick and smooth, and sags in folds toward the bottom of the tree. The tree is adapted to the hot, dry climate because it is able to store water in the spongy wood of its huge trunk. Some of the other desert plants store water in large underground roots. Many rest as seeds until the rainy season. The seeds cannot germinate without water, but, when the rain falls, the seeds can finally sprout.

The desert is without rain for almost 10 months of the year. A hot, dry wind blows across the desert most of the time. During the two cool months, June and July, the bushes and grass are covered with frost at dawn. Any water left standing freezes at night. Days warm slowly to around 80 degrees, but the cold returns at night.

Rains come at last to the Kalahari in December, January, and February. At this time, holes in the ground fill with water, and small ponds form. All of the desert life becomes active with the coming of the rains. The grass turns green, and new leaves and

blossoms appear on the bushes. Flowering plants add bright colors to the desert scene. Much of the plant life sprouts from seeds that have rested while waiting for moisture. The plants bud, blossom, and bear their seeds quickly, for the season is short. The animals of the Kalahari graze on the new, tender plants brought to life by the long-awaited rains.

In March the drought, or dry time, returns. When the rains stop, the water holes start to dry up. They become slippery mud and then caked white earth. By June only little water holes which are deep in the ground and covered with long grass are left. These water holes are miles apart, and travel in the desert is nearly impossible when the water holes completely dry up in August.

To adapt to the desert environment, the animals, like plants, face the task of finding and storing water. Some desert animals seek a drink or store water in surprising places. Lizards and insects often lap dew at daybreak. Dew is tiny drops of water formed at night when it is cool. Desert tortoises carry extra body water around with them in two sacs under their upper shell. These sacs serve as two canteens for the tortoises. Many birds, such as the ostrich, and grass eaters, such as the antelope, travel across the desert to water holes. When times are very dry they often seek water outside the desert.

The Kalahari Desert is the home of people called Bushmen. The Bushmen are rather small people. As adults, they are four and one-half

to just over five-feet tall. These people once lived on the rich grasslands of South Africa. In a struggle with cattle-raising peoples for the grasslands, the Bushmen were driven north. They found safety on the Kalahari, and as a hunting and gathering people still live as the earliest people on earth once did.

Because of the harsh desert conditions, the Bushmen do not plant crops or herd animals. Instead, they gather roots, berries, and nuts, and hunt animals. When the water holes in one place are dry and little food remains, the Bushmen must move to a new place. In their search for food and water, these people must move a great deal. They do not stay in one spot, but migrate from place to place. Such people are called nomads.

Where food and water can be found, a band of about 20 Bushmen set up a werf, which is their word for camp. A visitor could probably walk through the werf without knowing it because the small, cone-shaped houses made of sticks and grass look much like bushes. The Bushmen live in these skerms, which give them shade during the day and shelter from the cool winds at night. Near the houses is a carefully placed row of ostrich eggshells, often decorated with carved designs of zigzags and diamonds, or animal pictures. The eggshells are important because they hold water. Each one is filled through a hole cut in the shell. The hole is then stopped up with grass.

The main task of desert survival is finding food and water. The Bushmen know the land well. When the water holes dry up, the Bushmen must search for new sources of water. A Bushman can find water where

no one else would think to look. He might walk a few feet to a little bush and pull out a tsama melon. He would make a hole in the top, mash the insides with a stick, and then drink the good juice. Other plants such as the bi and ga roots and the wild cucumber may be eaten for their juice. Another way a Bushman can get water is from sip wells. In some places, rain water is held in the moist sand. The water is three to four feet from the surface. He digs into the sand with a reed, which is a kind of grass with a hollow stem like a drinking straw. He sucks water through the reed and then stores the water in an ostrich eggshell. The Bushman works hard to get this necessity for survival.

The women and children gather fruit and nuts. Meat makes up only a small part of the food that the Bushmen eat. The Bushmen cannot always depend on animals as they can on plants. Over 100 kinds of plants are gathered for food. These include roots, bulbs, berries, other fruits, nuts, and leafy greens. The most important of these food plants is the mongongo nut. Mongongo nuts are a major part of the Bushman diet.

Early each morning, some of the women and children go to gather plants. The sun is not yet up, but it is already hot on the Kalahari. Some mornings, they have to walk many miles over the dry grass before they find anything. A digging stick, usually a tall, pointed branch, is used by the women. With this, they break the sunbaked earth and free the roots or plants to be gathered. Back at the werf, a shallow

wooden bowl, called a stamping block, is used to mash seeds and nuts.

Early in the morning, the hunters are busy too. They must prepare their arrows before they go. First, the hunters file iron pieces into points for arrowheads. The arrowheads are carefully tied onto split sticks and then smeared with a poison that will kill the animals. This poison is made from bark or roots and the dried insect larvae of the ngoa moth. Sometimes, the venom of the deadly snake, the mamba, is used. The arrows are stuck, points upward, into the sand until the poison dries. The men are now ready for the hunt.

Antelopes and other large animals are regularly hunted with poisoned arrows. The Bushmen hunt smaller animals in other ways. Sometimes they dig into the underground burrows of animals like the springhares. The hunters hook the animal with a metal hook that is attached to a long pole. Then they dig up the soft sand to capture it.

Another animal that is hunted for food is the big leopard tortoise. This tortoise weighs up to eight pounds. It is easily caught by men, women, or children. The tortoise is baked in the shell and can feed a family of four.

The Bushmen do not wander across the whole desert alone. To survive, they live together in small bands. Each band has its territory, which includes a water hole and a vast stretch of land around it. Each band must ask permission to cross another band's territory. When a band moves, it goes to another place in its own territory.

Arranging the land into territories helps create order in a hunting and gathering culture. The people of the band know their territory well. The hunters know where game can be found in certain seasons and times of the day. In dry times, they know where to look for sip wells. Remembering where a green plant grew during the rainy season, Bushmen know where to look for food at a later time. They find the dried-up leaves of the plant and dig into the ground for its roots.

blossoms appear on the bushes. Flowering plants add bright colors to the desert scene. Much of the plant life sprouts from seeds that have rested while waiting for moisture. The plants bud, blossom, and bear their seeds quickly, for the season is short. The animals of the Kalahari graze on the new, tender plants brought to life by the long-awaited rains.

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---------- DO ACTIVITY SHEET A ----------

The Kalahari Desert is the home of people called Bushmen. The Bushmen are rather small people. As adults, they are four and one-half

(Sample page from the passage for treatment groups NA and GA)

no one else would think to look. He might walk a few feet to a little bush and pull out a tsama melon. He would make a hole in the top, mash the insides with a stick, and then drink the good juice. Other plants such as the bi and ga roots and the wild cucumber may be eaten for their juice. Another way a Bushman can get water is from sip wells. In some places, rain water is held in the moist sand. The water is three to four feet from the surface. He digs into the sand with a reed, which is a kind of grass with a hollow stem like a drinking straw. He sucks water through the reed and then stores the water in an ostrich eggshell. The Bushman works hard to get this necessity for survival.

---------- GET ACTIVITY SHEET B ----------

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